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RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 6422
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 5280
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 003711

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FATA UPDATE - 21 NOVEMBER 2008

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 3678
 1B. ISLAMABAD 3627

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) Summary: Operations continued in Bajaur Agency as the military continued to move to the southern border. In Mohmand Agency, Pakistan air assaults continued on the northern border and limited unit movement on the southern border to cordon and search for militants on a house-by-house basis. The DI Khan district in the NWFP continued to see a rise in sectarian violence as a remote-controlled explosive device detonated near a funeral procession, sparking widespread violence in the district. Due to the ongoing violence and Pakistan military operations in the FATA and NWFP, thousands of displaced persons are moving into neighboring Peshawar and Charsadda districts as international and non-governmental organizations are quickly preparing camps and humanitarian assistance for the new arrivals. Simultaneously, many of these same organizations are pulling their international staff back to Islamabad while continuing operations as the violence is becoming more targeted and prevalent. Embassy personnel are working with Frontier Corps to improve outreach to civilians for future information campaigns. End Summary.

12. (C) Throughout the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), a number of security incidents took place during the week of November 121. While we do not think these incidents are part of a coherent militant campaign, they do signal an increasingly unstable security environment.

BAJAUR UPDATE

13. (C) On November 20, a suicide bomber killed twelve worshippers and injured several others at a mosque during prayers in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and among the dead was anti-taliban, pro-government tribal lashkar leader Rehmatullah Khan. According to local press, this attack was in response to recent Pakistan military operations whereby seventeen militants, including 11 foreigners, were killed when Pakistan security forces, backed by helicopter gunships and artillery, targeted militant hideouts in Mamond, giving way to Pakistan troop movements into Zorband and Lowi Sam in southern Bajaur. (Comment. Accounts of the attack clearly indicate that Rehmatullah was specifically targeted. What we do not know is whether it was motivated by his involvement in organizing lashkars or whether it was a more general retaliation for government actions against militants. End

comment.)

DETERIORATING SECURITY IN DI KHAN

¶4. (C) During a funeral procession on November 21 in the Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan) District of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), at least nine mourners were killed and approximately fifty injured by a remote-controlled explosive device placed near the procession's path. Following the attack, violence erupted in the city whereby protesters set fire to vehicles, local shops, a bank branch and a bus terminal. (Note. Local staff for OTI was forced to temporarily close their DI Khan-located office due to the deteriorating security situation in the city. End note.) OTI staff believe this attack was sectarian in nature as opposed to further talibanization.

MOHMAND UPDATE

¶5. (SBU) Reftel A reported on recent events in Mohmand Agency. While the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told us they are not able to open a new operation to deal with those IDPs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assured us they are ready. The former Afghan refugee camp at Jalozi is being refurbished and can accommodate the expected influx from Mohmand.

GENERAL UPDATES FROM ICRC, UNHCR

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¶6. (SBU) The Embassy also spoke this week with UNHCR and ICRC leadership to get an update on their operations. While both continue to work on providing for IDPs fleeing conflict in Bajaur and Mohmand agencies, ICRC has also been engaging in Baluchistan, principally in earthquake relief. ICRC Country Director and Deputy told Embassy Border Coordinator and Poloffs that the stepped up operations around the earthquake would help ICRC make inroads in other sectors in which they had been hoping to work in Baluchistan, including primary health care, clean water, and livestock management. Both officials noted the differences in the security situation in the south; unlike in the FATA, ICRC had never been targeted by Baloch insurgents.

MORE SUPPORT NEEDED FOR IDPs

¶7. (SBU) Embassy is reporting septel on our request for USG assistance for IDPs over the next year. For their part, ICRC told us they have food and provisions in place for 10,000 families (60,000 people) for the winter. They also plan to refurbish an existing building in Peshawar to become a surgical hospital for victims of the conflict. In addition, ICRC is making the case with their headquarters for procurement of an airplane capable of using small airstrips along the border; the security situation in the FATA and parts of the NWFP, including Swat district, increasingly precludes travel by road, leaving significant areas un-served by humanitarian relief efforts and medical care.

¶8. (SBU) On the resource front, ICRC is beginning to feel stretched; they told us informally they will probably be issuing an additional appeal around the first of the year. ICRC recently published a USD 20 million budget forecast for 2009 (up from the current USD 16 million), but the country director believes this will fall significantly short of needs. Instead, properly resourced, ICRC's Pakistan program should expand to around \$40 million by the end of next year.

UNHCR STILL WORKING, WITH REDUCED STAFF IN PESHAWAR

¶ 9. (C) In the wake of serious security incidents in Peshawar during the week of November 10 (a suicide bombing, the murder of a USAID contractor, the kidnapping of an Iranian diplomat and the attempted kidnapping of a Japanese journalist), as well as specific threats to its own organization, UNHCR has decided to reduce its international staff there. Formerly over 30 people, the Peshawar office will be drawn down to about ten, with rotations in and out as needed. UNHCR suspended field missions temporarily, but were due to resume on November 25.

¶ 10. (C) UNHCR's deputy country director assured Embassy there will be no stop to their activities, including support for IDP camps. NWFP Police have promised 100 officers to secure the UNHCR premises in Peshawar and to escort UNHCR employees visiting and working at the camps. They will also conduct their own patrols of the camps, in light of some security incidents, including the recent carjacking (reportedly by taliban) inside the Kachagari camp of a humanitarian agency vehicle.

CIVILIAN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

¶ 11. (C) Embassy continues to maintain that the GOP institutions must have better communications with the civilians, which was not seen in the November 4-5 government leaflet drop in Mohmand Agency prior to the military operations. (Ref B) Due to high illiteracy rates and the inability to disseminate broadly print media, radio has been determined to be the medium of choice to spread word about military operations and places of refuge for those displaced. The Military Information Support Team (MIST) plans to work with the Frontier Corps to improve outreach to civilians for future information campaigns.

FEIERSTEIN